

Dispute Over Slavery in Kansas Territory

Overview

This lesson focuses on the dispute over slavery in Kansas Territory. The students will use two pieces of persuasive writing from the period (primary sources) to understand the views of proslavery and antislavery settlers. By comparing and contrasting to gain information, the students will write a persuasive ending to the antislavery document. The lesson is designed to take two class periods but can be adjusted to meet individual class schedules.

Standards

History:

Benchmark 2, Indicator 2 The student describes how the dispute over slavery shaped life in Kansas Territory (e.g., border ruffians, bushwackers, jayhawkers, the Underground Railroad, free-staters, abolitionists).

Benchmark 2, Indicator 3 The student analyzes the importance of “Bleeding Kansas” to the rest of the United States in the years leading up to the Civil War (e.g., national media attention, caning of Senator Charles Sumner, emigrant aid societies, Beecher Bible and Rifle Colony).

Reading:

Benchmark 4, Indicator 14 The student identifies the author’s position in a persuasive text and describes techniques the author uses to support that position (e.g., bandwagon approach, glittering generalities, testimonials, citing statistics, other techniques that appeal to reason or emotion).

Writing:

Benchmark 4, Indicator 12: The student uses language that is appropriate for persuasive writing and easy for the audience to understand (Word Choice: prewriting, drafting, revising: N,E,T,P).

Objectives

Content:

- The student compares and contrasts the beliefs about slavery between proslavery and antislavery forces during Kansas Territory.
- The student defines names used during the territorial period to define proslavery and antislavery beliefs.

Skills:

- The student compares and contrasts two different points of view.
- The student analyzes the ways in which events in Kansas Territory led to the Civil War.
- The student uses language that is appropriate for persuasive writing.

Essential Questions

- Why were the nation’s eyes on Kansas during the territorial period?
- Why was the issue of slavery so volatile in Kansas Territory?
- What arguments did proslavery and antislavery forces make for settling Kansas Territory?



Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas* cards:

- **Fighting Against Slavery in Kansas Territory**
- **Fighting For Slavery in Kansas Territory**

Day 1

1. Have the students read the first page of both **Fighting Against Slavery in Kansas Territory** and **Fighting For Slavery in Kansas Territory** *Read Kansas* cards.
2. As a class discuss the various viewpoints against and for slavery. Reinforce the definitions of the terms used to describe people with a specific point of view.
3. Have the students read the primary sources that are on the back pages of the *Read Kansas* cards. One source represents the proslavery point of view (*Defense of Kansas*) and the other the antislavery point of view (*The Voice of Kansas: Let the South Respond*).
 - Depending on the reading abilities of your class, this can either be done as a group or individual activity. If the class has difficulty with the reading level, try reading it aloud to them and they should be able to comprehend the main ideas.
4. If needed, use the graphic organizers to aid in reading the primary sources. Have the students read the documents one paragraph at a time. Have the students write in their own words the main idea of each paragraph. Certain phrases in each paragraph are highlighted to help the students determine the main points.
5. Have the students complete the worksheet to see if they understand the main points of each primary source.

Day 2

1. Have a class discussion about what they learned from the two primary sources. Discuss both points of view and the ways in which the authors try to persuade their audiences.
2. Have each student review the antislavery source by Henry Ward Beecher. Have each student re-read the piece and then write his or her own one-page persuasive ending. The student should be able to use information gleaned from both the proslavery and antislavery primary source to craft an antislavery argument.

Extended Activity

- Both primary sources “predict” the eventual Civil War. Have the students use the information from this lesson to debate the ways in which events in Kansas Territory led to the Civil War. Did the Civil War start in Kansas? Would the Civil War have happened without the debate over slavery in Kansas Territory?

Assessment

1. Observe the students’ ability to discuss the point of view of each primary source and compare and contrast the material.
2. Evaluate the students’ ability to use appropriate words and phrases to complete his or her persuasive writing.

For the Teacher

If you are using the textbook, *The Kansas Journey*, this lesson can be used with chapter 4, pages 66-91. The primary sources used in this lesson, as well as others, can be found at www.territorialkansasonline.org. *The Voice of Kansas: Let the South Respond* is from the collection of the Kansas State Historical Society and *Defense of Kansas* is from the collection of the University of Kansas.

Notes about Kansas Territory and the struggle over slavery.

- The six-year struggle for control of the territory of Kansas, often called Bleeding Kansas, was a prelude to the American Civil War. It was by no means the sole cause of that conflict, but the political turmoil that emerged from the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 caused a sometimes violent confrontation between pro- and antislavery factions in Kansas and increased sectional tensions nationwide. The story of territorial Kansas is, therefore, one of national significance.
- Unrest was a fact of life in Kansas Territory. Election fraud was common. Efforts to approve or reject specific constitutions also were disputed. The site of the capital was changed several times. One town, Pawnee, was the capital but the territorial legislature met there for only six days before moving to Shawnee Indian Mission. Four different constitutions were written before Kansas became a state. Kansas settlers had to deal with these disputes as they built homes, farms, and businesses. The Lecompton Constitution included a provision to allow slavery. At one point, two governments operated in Kansas. Supporters of slavery established a government according to federal guidelines in Lecompton. Those opposed to slavery claimed control in Topeka. Kansas had ten governors or acting governors in just six years.
- Many people who settled in Kansas had strong opinions about slavery. Some supported the use of slaves in the new territory. Others opposed the idea. Some were abolitionists who wanted to end slavery wherever it existed. These differences of opinion led to heated debates and even battles in Kansas Territory. The conflicts in Kansas and how they were reported in eastern newspapers contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Notes about using primary sources:

- Historians use primary sources to determine what happened in the past.
- A primary source is a document or an artifact that was created at the time of an event or by a person who was present at the event. This makes it a first-hand account. Photographs, newspapers, broadsides, census records, letters, and diaries all are primary sources.
- Once an historian pieces together the events of the past through primary sources, he or she interprets those materials to tell the story of the past.
- When primary sources are edited they may contain bracketed words ([]). This may be done when the original word is misspelled. The words in brackets indicate what was inserted by the editor.
- When primary sources are edited for length they will contain ellipses (...). This means words or sentences have been deleted.
- When a primary source is transcribed there may be words that cannot be deciphered and they will be marked in a specific way (xxx).
- If a primary source is difficult to read and understand try reading it aloud. This generally helps with comprehension.

Answer key:

	<i>The Voice of Kansas: Let the South Respond</i>	<i>Defense of Kansas</i>
Who are they trying to persuade?	people who are antislavery	people who are proslavery
What is their point of view?	They are in favor of allowing slavery to expand into Kansas.	They do not want slavery to expand into Kansas.
How do they describe the opposing point of view?	a fanatical and lawless portion of northern society	representatives of barbarism who do not have education and cannot read
What justification do they give for their point of view?	their beliefs are justified by the Bible	free-staters bring education, books and newspapers, free schools and churches
What do they think will happen if the opposing point of view wins?	they expect that slavery will not exist in Kansas	they expect "war, and blood, and cruelty, wasting and despair"

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Resources for this lesson are from:

- Kansas State Historical Society collections
- Kansas Collections, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas

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